

Assessment of quality assurance of existing practices on APEL for TVET teacher training (TVET-TT) among the participating RCP member countries

(RCP Vot No: 83132826)

Prepared by Prof. Dr. Jailani Md Yunos, PhD, Prof. Dr. Noraini Kaprawi, PhD, Prof. Dr. Maizam Alias, PhD, Nor Lisa Sulaiman, PhD, Marlina Mohamad, PhD, Kahirol Mohd Salleh, PhD, Lai Chee Sern, PhD

Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education
University of Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Accreditation of Prior Experimental Learning (APEL) is relatively a new concept in Malaysia higher education institutions although it has been broadly practiced and well recognized in several countries across the globe such as South Africa, Australia and America. Due to its under exposure in Malaysia, a research has been done in order to get a better understanding of how APEL should be implemented in Malaysia specifically on teacher training. The aim of this research is to assess the quality assurance of existing practices on APEL for TVET teacher training (TVET-TT) among the participating RCP partner countries including Malaysia. This research is mainly a qualitative study involving several methods which are document analysis, thematic analysis and focus group discussion. The document analysis was conducted to identify the gap practices based on the similarities and differences in the APEL practices among the participating countries. For the thematic analysis, interviews with officers from the Open University Malaysia and the Malaysia Qualification Agency had been carried out to identify the APEL practice within the context of Malaysia. Apart from that, several focus group discussions were conducted to validate the APEL framework involving Wawasan Open University representing Malaysia as well as from research counterparts and several ASEAN countries namely Indonesia, Laos and Cambodia. Based on the findings from the above-mentioned analyses, a general framework on APEL process was created. The APEL framework developed was a generic and therefore, the participating countries will modify according to their needs and policy. This newly developed APEL framework has significant implications on the TVET teaching training programs from the aspect of acquisitions teachers with industrial ready skills and shortens of the training durations. In the nutshell, this APEL framework can be used as a guideline or reference for the implementation of APEL, however, some modifications are still required to fine-tune this general framework for better implementation in the future.

Where there has been research, the findings suggest that there is still a lack of awareness, clarity about the nature, value and purpose of RPL and institutional bureaucracy and inexperience, and the absence of expertise in assessment of experiential learning remain constraining factors for widespread implementation of APEL-RPL in Malaysia (Kaprawi, Razzaly, Raja (2010). While APEL-RPL implementation is in the process of maturing in Malaysia, an important question that needs to be dealt with urgently, is 'what guarantees are there that institutions are offering a quality assured programme of APEL. With its implementation of APEL-RPL, be it limited; thus quality assurance remains an issue to be dealt with. Of particular importance, there is an urgency to assess the quality assurance of existing practices on APEL for TVET teacher training (TVET-TT) in participating countries. It is believed that while some participating RCP member countries may be in similar developmental stage as Malaysia, some may have advanced further in implementing RPL and its quality assurance. Thus, experience and expert sharing with participating RCP member countries is crucial in setting up a benchmark APEL of TVET-TT for Malaysia and similar participating members.

3.0 Research question

In specific the research will provide relevant information to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the status of APEL practice in participating countries?
2. What is the similarities and/or differences in APEL practices?
3. Which quality factors might be identified from the literature discussion? (Analysis of theoretical discussion in the literature, e.g. quality factors, criteria and standards)
4. What is the theoretical framework of APEL?
5. How is the APEL framework that might be feasibly applicable to all the participating countries?

4.0 Methodology

The aim for this research is to assess the quality assurance of existing practices on APEL for TVET teacher training (TVET-TT) among the participating RCP partner countries including Malaysia. The overall research process was developed to pursue the aim of this research as illustrated in Figure 4.1. It was divided into two types of analysis which are document analysis and thematic analysis. Both analyses were done at the same time.

A qualitative method approach, which has an open ended nature, may leads the research project to a perpetual resistance against attempts to impose a single, umbrella-like paradigm over the entire project (Lincoln & Denzin, 2011). This approach was adopted for this research study based on strengthening of this research method to support the aim and objectives of this research. It allowed researcher to interpret the literature review (document analysis), interview (thematic analysis) and focus group discussion as mains procedure to collect data.

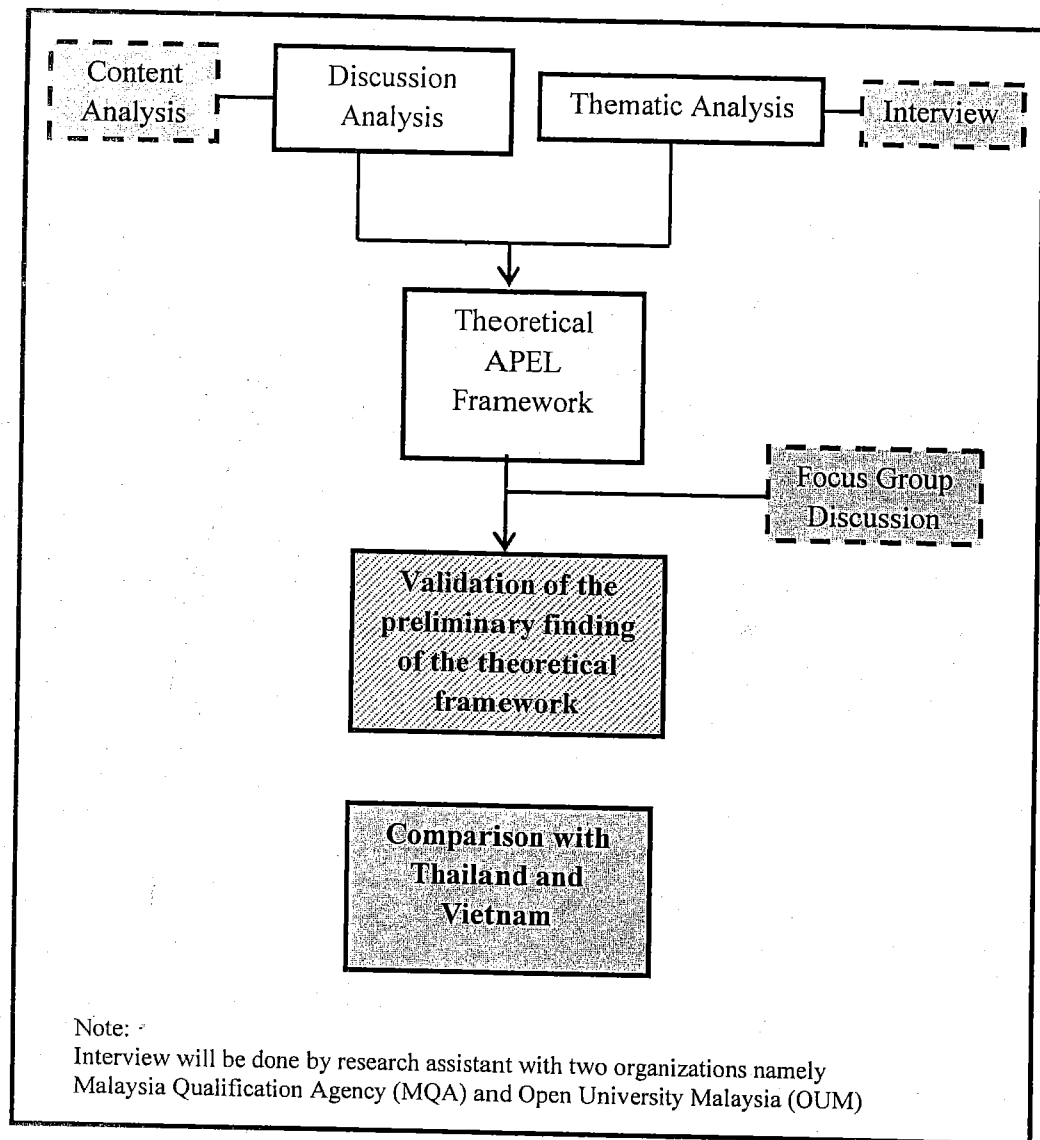


Figure 4.1: Overall Research Process

4.1 Sampling

The sample for this research was selected by the purposive sampling method. They consisted of expert in the related field. Expert is defined by the fact that this sample had undergone an APEL process in their respective institution. The samples are an officer from Open University Malaysia (OUM) and Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA).

Open University Malaysia is one of the higher education institutions in Malaysia that was given mandate to implement an open entry system by the government for the purpose of lifelong learning education. Via this system, OUM is allowed to take up

For the second and third research questions, both were answered by using the document analysis. The documents used are the policies of APEL from various higher education institutions around the world.

For the last two research question, the answer for both was obtained by doing document analysis and focus group discussion. The focus group discussions were done during a workshop on APEL held by the research team. The member for this focus group discussion is the representative from several Asian higher education institutions and expert from Malaysia as well. From this focus group discussion, a consensus was made for the APEL theoretical framework thus creates a valid framework for the use of Malaysia and the partner as well. Table 5.1 shows the analysis plan for each research question.

Table 5.1: Analysis plan for research question.

Research Question	Analysis plan
1. What is the status of APEL practice in participating countries?	Document analysis & thematic analysis (Interview)
2. What are the similarities and/or differences in APEL practices?	Document analysis
3. Which quality factors might be identified from the literature discussion? (Analysis of theoretical discussion in the literature, e.g. quality factors, criteria and standards)	Document analysis
4. What is the theoretical framework of APEL?	Document analysis & Focus Group Discussion
5. How is the APEL framework that might be feasibly applicable to all the participating countries?	Document analysis & Focus Group Discussion

Table 5.1: (Cont.)

STAGE	CHARACTERISTIC	ASIA		EUROPE		NVATANGA	NQV	WORCESTER	PEARSON	EVC	FETAC	FRANCE
		MOA	OUM	UCAS	STAFFORDSHIRE							
Pre-assessment	Pre-entry	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Initial contact	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Pre-screening	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Pre-application counseling	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Learning identification	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Assessment	Application	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Preparation for assessment	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Assessment	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Judgement	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Verification	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Appeal	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Moderation	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Feedback	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Accreditation and certification	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Recording	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Award Post-assessment	Post-RPL counseling / Guidance	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
	Training	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

HE (SA)

SAQA

MQA

UNISA

AUS. U

TAFE

ACU

US

MANITOBA

ALGONQUIN

BC

: Higher Education Institution in South Africa

: South African Qualification Authority

: Mauritius Qualification Authority

: University of South Africa

: Australian Universities

: The Bremer Institution of TAFE

: Australian Catholic University

: United States

: University of Manitoba, Canada

: Algonquin College, Canada

: British Columbia University

MQA

OUM

UCAS

STAFFORDSHIRE

NYATANGA

NQV

WORCESTER

PEARSON

EVC

FETAC

FRANCE

: Malaysian Qualification Agency

: Open University Malaysia

: The University and Colleges Admissions Service

: Staffordshire University

: Nyatanga research (1998) : Command process model in UK

: National Vocational Qualification

: University of Worcester, UK

: Pearson Education Limited

: Elders Verworwen Competencies, Netherlands

: FETAC, Ireland

: France

6.2 Theoretical framework of APEL

The theoretical framework of APEL was designed based on focus group discussion. In this research, a focus group discussion workshop was held at Office for Research, Innovation, Commercialization and Consultancy Management (ORICC), UTHM. This workshop was organized by Advance Centre for Technical and Vocational Education who is the coordinator for this research. The 3 days workshop was held for the purpose to develop and design APEL theoretical framework. Participant were given a draft of APEL process model designed by UTHM research members and asked to share some experience and knowledge on APEL implementation in their country. During the discussion they point out some view on the APEL process model draft. Then, the consensus on description has been made.

However the process model was not the final model yet. The 2nd International Workshop for the purpose to find out the ideal or feasibly applicable the model to all participating countries was held at Permai Hotel, Kuala Terengganu for 3 days. Again, the focus group discussion was held and all the participants from several countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodia were involved. Table 6.2 illustrates the details description of APEL process model from the pre-assessment stage, assessment stage, award and post-assessment stage.

Table 6.2: The Ideal APEL Process Model for TVET-TT Program

	PROCESSES	DESCRIPTION
Pre-assessment	Pre-entry (Publicity and promotional activities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise through website e.g. Ministry of Higher Education or Malaysian Qualifications Agency and join Higher Education Carnival/ Fair • Use social media (facebook, tweeter, geek etc.) , mass media (TV, newspaper, magazine, etc.) and all the relevant stakeholders e.g. alumni • Form advisory board / Organize outreach program, road shows etc. to approach potential candidates. • Distribute newsletters and testimonies to potential participants • Work with regulatory bodies (such as Education Ministry, Human Resource Department/Ministry, Technology Promotion Association (Thailand-Japan)-www.tpa.or.th or www.e-3L.com) • Organise forum for Career counsellors (in educational institutions) Marketing / Communications Officer in corporate / government companies, organisations etc.
	Initial contact (Application materials & related forms)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APEL handbook and guidelines • Application form • FAQ • General briefing/advice to be provided if required by applicant
	Learning identification through self-assessment & application submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-assessment (online or hardcopies) by student based on menu of suitable courses from the faculty for <i>TVET teacher training</i> • Candidate refers to curriculum checklist and qualification rubric** (prepared by the institution) which need to be compared/matched with candidate's Formal Learning (Certificated learning eg. Diploma etc), Non-formal learning (eg. Seminars, workshops etc) and Informal Learning (available on website) <p>** Rubric to match experiential learning to standard (course learning outcome)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling and advice provided by course expert • Submission of application form and the related fees (based on the institution)

Hence, Table 6.3 illustrates the assessment component and the details description on how assessment been made included the characteristic of advisor and assessor. One of the advisors responsibilities was to assist candidates to identify the learning outcomes associated with the experience and identifies areas where claim might be formulated. However, to give affective advice and guidance, the advisor must have better understanding of what will need to be demonstrated to meet leaning outcomes of the program. Hence, advisor needs to be confident to provide advice on the types of evidence that are appropriate especially when demonstrating learning through experience (EUCEN, 2007).

According to participants, challenge test and portfolio were appropriate assessment method in APEL assessment whereby challenge test can be various forms of assessment such as test, demonstration and site visit. The two assessment also been practiced by OUM, however in OUM the learners were assessed either through challenge test or through portfolio only (Yick, 2012). Challenge test definition by Algonquin (2007) is a method of assessment administrated by faculty to measure an individual's learning achievement in reference to the course learning requirements. It measures demonstrated learning through written and non-written evaluation while portfolio is a formally presented document which describes learning achievement from prior experience, links the learning to specific college course learning requirements and shows validation or proof through third party documentation and other form evidence. In conjunction for the chosen assessment methods, the portfolio enables articulation of learning from the learner's perspective as learners experienced and it is the most comprehensive tool available for the assessment of prior learning. Hence portfolio development engages the applicant in a process of self review before beginning a program of study whereby it enables self discovery, self-esteem through affirmation of personal competence, development of academic skill and as theoretical and practical understanding of the learning process.

5. Assessment criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is compulsory to pass both assessment components (portfolio & challenge test/interview) • Rubric for assessment (matching of content and level of study) • The certificated qualification must be verified • Evidence / statement presented must be verified by referees. • Assessment tools used must meet the criteria of validity, sufficiency, currency and authenticity • Assessors will take into account the level, standard, content, relevance and currency of the prior learning. The following must be observed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appropriate assessment method according to the learning activity 2. Appropriate assessment method according to the level of qualification sought 3. Ensure reliability 4. Ensure validity 5. Plan the process of assessment. 6. State results objectively • Authenticity, Quality, Currency, Sufficiency
6. Result	<p><u>PORTFOLIO</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results to be recorded as Accept / Reject on the transcript (for entry). • Results to be recorded as APEL Credit on the transcript (for Credit Transfer/Advanced Standing) • Conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Credit sought by portfolio cannot duplicate other coursework - Total number of credits allocated for one portfolio is maximum six credits (based on individual country) - Students must first register with the University to apply or receive such services (only those applying APEL for credit transfer) - The onus lies with the students to prepare an acceptable portfolio based on the prescribed guidelines <p><u>CHALLENGE TEST</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results to be recorded as Accept/Reject on the transcript. • Conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A student can only take the challenge exam/test only once and cannot repeat for a course that s/he has failed or registered previously - Students must first register with the University to apply or receives such services
7. Accreditation and Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For admission: by regulatory bodies in the respective country e.g. In Malaysia the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) will issue the APEL Certification award • For Advanced Standing / Credit Transfer: issued by the relevant faculty in the respective institutions e.g. an APEL Credit Transfer result statement/slips/certificate • Certified by the APEL committee of the faculty.
8. Appeal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applicant only repeat the assessment component that he/she failed 2. The new assessor should be appointed for the assessment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Candidates can appeal for review of their assessment results - For appeal related to admission, candidates must submit their appeal to the Dean of Students and Academic Registrar while appeal for credit transfer has to be directed to Dean of the relevant Faculty. - The decision of the board on the results of the appeal will be final and no further appeal shall be allowed. - Candidates can appeal for review of their assessment results - For appeal related to admission, candidates must submit their appeal to the Dean of Students and Academic Registrar while appeal for credit transfer has to be directed to Dean of the relevant Faculty. - The decision of the board on the results of the appeal will be final and no further appeal shall be allowed.

7.0 Conclusion and recommendation

The findings of this research provide an overview of the process in developing a framework that is valid to be used in real situation. The APEL framework created from this research is an outcome that is stated in one of the research question in chapter one. The implementation of APEL in education is relatively a new system based on the finding. Therefore, by having an appropriate framework on APEL, it may help any other institution to implement APEL in more systematic and efficient ways respectively. Though there are still a lot of works to do, this research can be considered as a pioneer research in the development of APEL system in Malaysia higher education system. It can be referred as the guideline for further research to be done in the same field. Needless to say, there are many other intrinsic and extrinsic outcomes that come out through the research process. The research area covered by this research may help in finding the alternative ways in developing TVET and thus increase the quality of TVETs' product in general.

Based on the implications of this study, a number of recommendations are useful for future research plans. For instance, before rolling out a research on APEL, steps should be taken to ensure that the concept is well understood by the research member. Research leader may choose a suitable and related members or giving brief explanations on APEL to the members before the research begin. This may help in reducing times and confusion among the members and having a more rigid and directive outcome from the discussion.

Certain limitations of our research provide opportunities for future research. First, the research design is a qualitative method design. The data obtained were only from instruments in qualitative ways. Because of this, we are not able to get data from the quantitative method such as questionnaires which may provide different point of result. Question such as the difficulties and challenge in implementation can be asked by using questionnaire. This can help in providing a more focus and direct answer. Hence, for future research, a mix method of research in the same field should be done to get a wider result. Therefore, different group of sample may be assigned.

Second, our research only focuses on the APEL framework in a whole process. This scope does not focusing on other critical stages of the process such as the assessment and appeal. Because of this limitation, the findings only depict 'half of the picture'. Hence, the study of these individual stages offers an opportunity for future research on experiential learning. Specifically, researchers may focus on specific stages such as the pre assessment, assessment or post assessment stage only. Researcher also may focus on the policies of APEL implementation instead of the process itself. Investigation on this issue can be fruitful and can help reveal the other half of the picture.

7.1 Acknowledgement

This project is under RCP-UTHM grant vote A028. We would like to express our gratitude to RCP and University of Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) for the endless support on this project.